



ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

IN NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

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EXTREMELY CONFIDENTIAL

to all Ordained and Probationary ministers of the Assemblies of God in New Zealand.

ISSUE: SEXUAL FAILURE OF SENIOR MINISTERS

Dear Pastor

Thankfully, only a few leaders fail morally. Sadly it does happen. However, it is more heart-breaking when national Christian leaders fail. Our heart-ache is that Frank Houston, a previous General Superintendent of the Assemblies of God in New Zealand and a leader in our nation, was permanently removed from ministry in 2000 by the Australian A/G. This was for serious sexual offences that took place 30 years ago. Allegations of Frank's offences came to our Executive's attention in the mid-90's, but were not acted upon because they were unsubstantiated and the witnesses were not clearly identified.

However, with clear evidence forthcoming in 1999/2000 we participated in the discipline that was carried out by the Australian A/G Executive, which permanently removed Frank from all ministry in Australia and New Zealand. Because of this removal and his sickness, it was mutually agreed that it was not necessary to make a broad statement to our ministers. However, because of spreading conjecture through the nation and the need to deal with this within our ministry, it is now apparent that such a notification should be made. We support the permanent stand-down from ministry administered by the Australian A/G and therefore he is not released to minister in our New Zealand churches.

Frank has been cooperating as well as can be expected considering his health and has expressed great remorse to our Australian brethren.

Another sad situation, that was dealt with in the mid-90's by the Australian A/G, was the sexual failure and discipline of [AMF], also a [REDACTED]. This action was publicised in the A/G-NZ General Secretary's Newsletter in March 1994, the following being a quote from the statement: "... [AMF] has committed adulterous offences and other indiscretions involving different women over an extended period of years. Because of the serious nature and pattern of sin, he has been removed from all forms of ministry."

Although he has been disciplined, stood down for two years, and reinstated by Australian A/G, he is not released to minister in our New Zealand churches because of the number of offences over a lengthy period of time in our country, and the fact that some of his victims would have difficulty in seeing him in a position of trust.

Our challenge has been how to deal with these men, as they were both resident in Australia when the offences were discovered and consequently were disciplined by the Australian A/G. We feel as a Fellowship, because of the [REDACTED] role these men held in NZ, we must advise our ministers so they might be aware as to why they are not acceptable for ministry in New Zealand.

ONE PURPOSE - making the passion of Jesus our priority

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The Executive Presbytery, although informing our ordained and probationary ministers through this letter, also proposes to work for a closure of this sad period and the pain it has caused to many.

Three further steps are proposed:

- 1) if you wish further personal clarification please feel free to ring an Executive member.
- 2) obviously, some may wish to discuss the issues in ministerial forum, so please convey your desire to your Regional Overseer who with the Executive Representative will arrange for at least two Executive members to attend a regional meeting to walk through the issues and spend time in prayer and consecration.
- 3) at our Conference, October 2002 we will, in the context of our theme ONE ARMY, give opportunity for consecration, prayer and closure of these incidents. A Biblical analogy is clearly portrayed as Joshua prepared Israel *through circumcision* before they moved ahead as an army.

We are aware of the various points of view held by our ministers on how failed ministers should be disciplined. Whilst in some cases restoration to ministry is possible, the nature and extent of the sinful behaviour of these two men requires a permanent stand-down. The nature of the church is restorative, but it is important to realize that restoration entails many steps – to God, to spouse, to family, to church, to victims (if possible), to fellow ministers and friends, to service, etc – and then only to leadership ministry if such a trust can be given with confidence.¹ We must all, as the Executive have, wrestle with the following:

- > whether to cover or expose,
- > whether certain sinful behaviour can exclude from being restored to ministry,
- > whether there is a difference between forgiveness and restoration to positions of trust, and
- > what is the impact failed national leaders have.

We ask that each of you approach this process with a clear mind and sensitive spirit.

We are aware that the above information may be a surprise and shock to some of you, and therefore, although we will provide collective opportunities to process the issues, you may feel the need to speak with an Executive member.

We have deliberately chosen to restrict this letter to our ordained and probationary ministers. We cannot see any reason for this to be announced to your church or further afield.

At times, sad as it may be, we must address such issues. However, our focus must remain on the good things God is doing, the vision He has burned into our hearts, and the fulfilling of the passion of Jesus to reach our communities with the gospel.

Yours in Christ's Service

R. Wayne Hughes
On behalf of the Executive Presbytery

¹ 1 Timothy 5:22